

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
ECOLOGICAL SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY DIVISION
WASHINGTON, D.C.

NOTICE OF RELEASE OF 'NORTHPA' AND 'SOUTHPA' BITTER PANICUM

The United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service announces the naming and release of 'Northpa' and 'Southpa' bitter panicum, *Panicum amarum* Ell. Identification was done by Dr. David Hall, Botanist, with the University of Florida.

Both bitter panicums were developed at the USDA Soil Conservation Service Plant Materials Center at Brooksville, Florida. From 1957 to 1980, the Plant Materials Center received and accessioned a total of 157 *Panicum amarum* and *P. amarulum* accessions from a very broad spectrum of locations within their range of adaptation.

'Northpa' and 'Southpa' were selected for their ease of establishment and their adaptation to coastal sand dune situations that exist in Florida and the other Gulf Coast states. Both cultivars have the ability to trap blowing sand and are thereby considered "dune builders" or "living

sandfences". The stems of the plant will stop sand as it is displaced by wind blowing as in the case of stormy weather conditions. Over a period of time this trapped sand will accumulate and form mounds which are referred to as sand dunes. As the sand dunes are being built the plants aerial stems that are covered will take root, thereby strengthening the old plant and giving rise to new ones. Both cultivars have the ability to resist being covered by sand whether its from blowing sand or from sand deposited by water..

Wind erosion protection, beach and sand dune stabilization and wildlife cover for birds are the primary reasons for the variety releases. A secondary reason for release is that other cultivars are not now available on the commercial market. Bitter panicum, despite the fact that it has to be vegetatively propagated, will fill the need for the species for use in these situations.

'Northpa', PI- 421957, origin Dare County, NC, was selected for more northern locations and is adapted further into the cooler climates thereof; 'Southpa', 9003324, from Palm Beach County, FL, came from and is adapted to more southern locations. The latter portion of each name "pa" (pronounced pay) is taken from the letters that are the abbreviations of

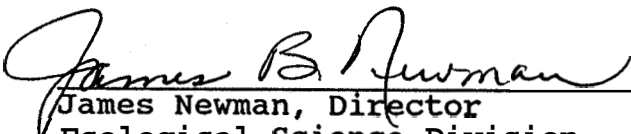
the genus and species names (i.e. 'p' for *Panicum* and 'a' for *amarum* = 'pa').

Initial evaluation data was first taken in 1977 on this species. It was not long in this process before it was realized that the species had problems with seed production. Various methods of vegetative propagation were tried. It was found that cuttings rooted in the greenhouse was the most successful and efficient means available. The success rate in the greenhouse is better than any other method. The use of auxins or growth hormones is strongly encouraged.


Panicum amarum, bitter panicum, occurs naturally in many locations in Florida. Several publications site the occurrence of this plant in all of the Gulf coastal states and all of the Atlantic coast states from Connecticut to Florida. There is great similarity between bitter panicum and coastal panic grass. Taxonomist are at times at odds with each other as to the most current classification of this species.

Breeder stock of 'Northpa' and 'Southpa' will be maintained by the USDA Soil Conservation Service's Plant Materials Center at Brooksville, Florida. Vegetative methods of

commercial production, which does not exclude micro propagation, will be used to sustain these cultivars.


James Newman, Director
Ecological Science Division
USDA, Soil Conservation Service
Washington, D.C.

3/19/92
Date


T. Niles Glasgow
State Conservationist
USDA, Soil Conservation Service
Gainesville, Florida

2/27/92
Date